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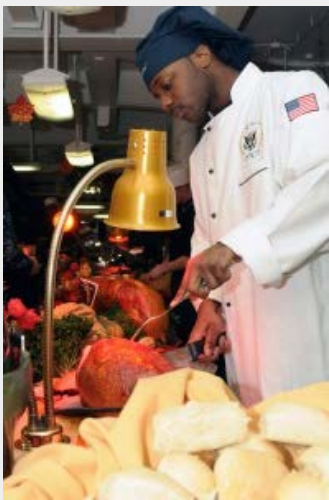
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Don't Get Burned During Holiday Cooking

Filed under [COMMUNITY SUPPORT](#) [FAMILIES](#) [FORCE HEALTH AND SAFETY](#) (NO COMMENTS)

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Culinary Specialist Seaman Aaron J. Hammond slices a ham on the mess decks aboard the aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77), Nov. 24, 2011. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Molly Treece/Released)

The weather is turning crisp and the leaves are changing colors. This can only mean one thing, the holidays are quickly approaching. The holidays bring many families and friends together. It is a time of celebration! As we have a want to do we enjoy these celebrations with food. Lots and lots of food. What better way of sharing your love of family and friends then to cook the traditional fare that we all have become accustomed to. Many of us are cooking foods that are not only very tasty, but we are cooking much more then we normally would. When in the midst of the festivities and preparation we may forget the basic tenants of food safety. Though your family recipe for stuffing may be tasty, if it is accompanied with harmful bacteria it can really place a damper on the holidays. Remember, bacteria are not invited guests, but they lurk in your kitchen ready to sit down with you at the dinner table. Below are some basic food safety tips to help reduce the risk of illness and ensure the meal is not only delicious but safe.

Food Handling: Before and after handling foods always wash your hands with warm soapy water for 15-20 seconds. Keep kitchen counters clean and sanitized. Wash food-contact surfaces (cutting boards, dishes, utensils, countertops) with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item. Use paper towels to clean

food contact surfaces. This will reduce the possibilities of cross-contamination. Do not put cooked foods on plates that previously held raw meat or poultry.

Thawing: Place frozen poultry in a pan and allow it to thaw slowly in the refrigerator.

Cooking: We have traditionally stuffed our turkeys with our family's secret stuffing recipes. Unfortunately, many cases of holiday timed food borne illness cases have been directly related to the stuffing and not the turkey. Stuffing has a tendency to insulate the turkey causing internal (the most important part) area of the bird not to reach the safe temperature zone. Additionally, the stuffing itself becomes contaminated from the raw juices and never reaches the same temperature of the bird causing bacteria to grow within the moist and only "warm" environment of the stuffing. Food safety expert recommend you cook stuffing separately on the stove top then add it to the fully cooked turkey for presentation. This not

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only keeps the stuffing moist but it lowers the risk of improper cooking temperature. If you must cook the stuffing within the turkey ensure the stuffing reaches the same internal safe temperature of the turkey: 165°F.

Food	Minimum Internal Temperature
Whole beef, roasts, steak, chops, pork, lamb, veal	145°F
Ground beef, pork, poultry, lamb, veal	155°F
Poultry (chicken, turkey), wild game, stuffed meats, stuffed fish, stuffed pasta, stuffing cooked inside the poultry	165°F

Holding: Keep hot foods HOT 140°F or warmer; Keep cold foods COLD 41°F or colder. Use shallow pans (less than 4”) and containers for better temperature distribution throughout the product.

Leftovers: Heat leftovers thoroughly to 165°F.

Room Temperature: Discard or refrigerate foods that have been at room temperature for more than 4 hours.

Additional Information and specific turkey thawing and cooking temperatures
are available at:
http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Countdown_to_the_Holiday/index.asp

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